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THE MILITIA

THE PROPER

FIELD FORCE

FOR

THE DEFENCE OF THE KINGDOM

AGAINST

INVASION,

SUPPORTED BY SUCH DIVISIONS OF THE

REGULAR ARMY

AS MAY BE STATIONED IN THE HOME DOMINIONS AT THE TIME.

"You that be Lieutenants and Gentlemen of Command in your Counties, I require you to take care that the People be well armed, and in readiness upon all occasions."—*Queen Elizabeth's Speech to Parliament, Anno* 1593.

LONDON:
T. & W. BOONE, NEW BOND STREET.
1859.

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THE MILITIA.

QUESTION.

Have not Englishmen their own domestic homesteads to guard?

ANSWER.

Yes;—and the graves of their forefathers.

THE English Constitution views the men of Britain as one vast army "cantoned" throughout the length and breadth of the Island; disbanded, indeed, habitually, but ready for action at all times in their localities, at a moment's notice.

This is not a mere Military Organization; it is the civil condition and normal state of the nation. It constitutes the *Civil Power*, and by the civil power, supported by an auxiliary Military Force, the *Regular Army*, the country is defensible against a foreign enemy or internal rebellion.

The "*Levy in Mass*" when called out is under the supreme command of the Sovereign of course, who governs it through functionaries appointed by the Constitution.

In every County there is a High Sheriff, who is ex officio the Commander of the Posse Comitatus.

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When all men bore arms the civil and military character were blended in the same individual, that is to say, in every Englishman. Called out by the Sheriff, he had to appear in arms, the arms in use at the time.

Unarmed, the Posse Comitatus would be inadequate against armed Violence, whether of a foreign enemy or of rebellious subjects.

But the use of arms has so long ceased to be general, that the Country is not at present sufficiently under-propped by that powerful support, the whole People, the whole Male Population armed and prepared.

Formerly it was the custom to enrol a portion of the Posse Comitatus under the name of "County Militia," and that was a natural, a constitutional, and an expedient practice while it lasted.

The strength of England was great under that sound national organization, but it was unfortunately allowed to wear out. One great deviation from *principle*,* diverted the powerful engine from its proper course, and gave it an obliquity at variance with the interests of the nation, and the good of the public.

The Militia Commission Report, just presented to Parliament, is valuable at this moment as a Commentary on the inconvenient position, which the country is placed in, as to its means of defence,

* Making the Militia subject to the Mutiny Act, and other subsequent vitiations of the Militia principle.

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by having departed from the old sacred principle of the Militia Obligation, as binding, both on the State and People. The State has no right to exact more from the People under pretext of raising a Militia, than the People are bound to accede to, in the way of personal service, by the fundamental laws of the Constitution.

Every County is bound to furnish a quota of men for military training for twenty-eight days in the year, and those men are to be forthcoming at all times to resist Invasion, or prolonged internal disorder, and they are amenable to the Civil Law for misdemeanours or failures of duty, but are not constitutionally subject to the Mutiny Act and Articles of War, as established for the Enlisted Forces. Nothing can be plainer, more simple, more natural or just, than the principle of the National Militia; and it behoves the Country to revert to that wholesome condition of things, which is the foundation of the Military strength of England.

The Militia should be raised as formerly *by Ballot*, substitutes being permitted of course, as formerly.

An immediate necessity calls for a general organization by which the whole strength of the kingdom may be made available in case of war. There should be an organization of the "*Levy in mass.*"

Every subdivision of the kingdom, whether Hundred, Rape, Lathe, Trything, or Wapontake, should be assessed for a proportion of men, to be called out

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every spring for *eight or nine days training, and practice in shooting at a mark.* A new man (or new men) may be furnished every year or not, according to the internal arrangements of the district, but this primary service should be limited to three years at most.

A superior class of the Militia should be enrolled for three years, for *Field Service*, not for *Garrison Duties*. The proportion of this Force should not be large, under ordinary circumstances. It should consist of Cavalry as well as Infantry: the cavalry to be taken from the existing Yeomanry; the period of training to be twenty-eight days, and the Lord Lieutenant of the County to command the whole, cavalry and infantry.

Thus a superior description of Field Force would grow up in the Country, capable of expansion into such an Army as would establish the security of the kingdom for ever, and silence every menace.

The regular Army is *auxiliary* to the Militia in England, and is a totally different institution; not less essential to the safety of the country, but principally necessary for the foreign dominions and distant possessions.

A portion of the regular Army should always be at home, and of course *must be so*, to keep up the recruiting, and do the duty of *Garrisons;* and therefore when a proper Militia System is established, the Country will be fully prepared, as to numbers of men in arms, to defy all dangers.

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That fundamental law of the Constitution which exempts the Militia from the operation of the Mutiny Act, should be no longer evaded, and the Militia should be at once, and for ever restored to its proper rank and dignity in the country, as *the first class of the Military Service* in the kingdom, representing the kingdom itself in arms, under the immediate charge of leaders taken from the highest orders in the realm, and commanded in chief by the Sovereign in person.

It would be inexpedient to parade the "Art Military" in all its theoretic minutiæ, as the palladium on which England is to depend for safety from Invasion and Defeat.

The two Military Services, afloat and ashore, will doubtless always be as they now are, *excellent*; but the regular forces are inadequate by themselves, and the *People of Britain* must individually take care of their own island, and ought to insist upon such a general organization as would enable every man to participate in the Defence of the Kingdom.

The Maritime Counties are in the front line, and the coast must be defended by its own inhabitants, supported by those of neighbouring localities, and the regular troops from all sides. Every man of average intellect and spirit may be made soldier enough *in ten days* for the purpose. It would be absurd to maintain an Army of highly-drilled troops at all times in sufficient numbers for the prospective object, and very improbable contingency,

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of having to repel an Invasion of England, even if the expense could be afforded by the country, and such an Army thought desirable, which it certainly would not be.

The impromptu soldier will be well adapted for service as a Yäger, or Light Infantry Skirmisher, in the locality which he knows, among the enclosures and villages near his native place. He would be the wrong sort of soldier to put into a fort. An experienced man is fittest for Garrison Service. Cooped up in casemates, and covered crenelated galleries, and the contracted spaces within fortifications, (of the *permanent* order), rustics or raw recruits would feel uneasy, and helpless, and dubious. The open field, the lanes, the roads, the hedged enclosures, where men can see around them, are the suitable ground for the levy in mass, acting jointly with the well-trained soldiers of the regular Army.

The Militia Cavalry would be a most important arm, employed in its own localities. Indeed, Local Service should be the rule for all Militia in general, subject of course to the exceptions suggested or rendered necessary by the circumstances attending an Invasion.

Concentric Bands of Country are the natural lines of defence for England. Concentric circles (or polygons, rather), opposing every day a more solid and condensed resistance to an advancing enemy. Neither sixty-six forts, nor any other cabalistical number of them, would ever supply the place of

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living concentric rings of fighting men, denser and denser the farther from the coast.

But how far from the coast would the enemy be allowed to advance?

How much farther than Julius Cæsar in his first attempt, when the ancient Britons stopped him a few miles from the shore, and sent him back to Gaul within three weeks?

Wherever he lands, or endeavours to land, the tactics for our people are plain and simple, viz. to oppose the landing with every man who can reach the place in time. If the landing is effected, the troops of all kinds, hurrying from all sides, should be formed into three large divisions; one in the enemy's front, and one on each of his flanks.

His further advance must then be ex-centric:—ex-centric from one single *point of operation*; therefore *inverting* the strategical principle which prescribes that an aggressive advance should proceed from a *Base of Operation*, affording *several Lines of Operation:*—not fewer than three, converging towards the *object*, or objective point.

If any, or all of the three bodies of our hastily collected troops should have to retire, they would be falling back on reinforcements, constantly arriving from the interior. In a few days the concentric rings would break outwardly into the form of an arc or crescent, enclosing within its horns the unhappy enemy on three sides, and ultimately closing on his fourth. What could he do, sur-

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rounded and hemmed in, but capitulate and lay down his arms, accepting a sentence of banishment (with convict labour) to the West Indies, or whatever other terms the People of England should think proper to dictate?

Let no Civilian believe in *Military Magic*, or pocket the alarm of 200,000 French troops landing in the course of a summer's day, swimming their thirty thousand horses ashore on the coast of Devonshire, marching into Exeter next morning, then advancing upon Bath, taking the unwary Master of the Ceremonies and his Column, "en flagrant delit," proceeding immediately to the occupation of London, and making that humbled City *a base of operations* against Portsmouth, and some other place upon the coast suitable for a tête de pont to cover the arrival of reinforcements from France.

This highly imaginative strategical operation, suggesting an easy "Promenade Militaire" across England, and back again, sins grievously against theories; leaving out of the question the humble consideration of possibilities. It pre-supposes an Army divested of flanks and rear, those usually sensitive parts of armies in general; a *Flankless* body of troops in motion, however, would be such a "Lusus Naturæ," as hitherto nobody has ever seen in the martial world. And it is to have every thing for sustenance within itself, except three articles, forage, fresh meat, and flour or *grain* to replace consumed biscuit; "*those three things the*

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invading Force would not require to carry, as it would be impossible to clear the country of them on their lines of march." What would make it impossible? Would the farmers have lost their heads, or the cattle their legs? When the French Invasion was expected at the end of the last century, and preparation was made against it, and orders and instructions given in detail, it was expressly enjoined to local functionaries to cause to be driven away from the vicinity of the coast, on the first alarm, all horses, cows, sheep and pigs; and doubtless it would occur to the Devonshire folks to do so, during the long summer day allowed to the French for their landing, while our Channel Fleet is to be fighting a wearisome battle with the French screw three-deckers, all which surely would give timely notice and alarm.

As to forage indeed, there might not be the means of removing it, but abundance of opportunity for setting stacks on fire.

In Queen Elizabeth's reign the Council of War recommended principally these things, viz., that the enemy should be "impeached" *at his landing*, and if he should march forward that the Country should be driven so as no "Victuals" would remain, and that he should be "*kept waking with continual alarms.*" These are good hints for all times. *To drive the Country* is one of the very first articles in the programme of defensive measures.

The defence of England must be an active one:

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an offensive defensive system. Her free soil is not to be insulted by permanent fortifications in the interior; but it would be very proper to make new distributions of the Store Artillery, and have depôts of guns, mortars and howitzers in other selected places besides Woolwich.

Fortresses without ramparts would suit England, and we know from South-Sebastopol, that strong earth-works may be thrown up in haste, when wanted, by the Party invaded, whose workmen are numerous.

Six millions and a half need not be thrown away on little Forts, (never to be of any use) to *purchase* a permanent annual expence besides for repairs and guarding.

To bring into notice and into activity the whole Man-strength of the Nation, the measures required are easy and simple, because the fundamental laws of England establish the groundwork of such an *Organization.*

If the People will co-operate with the local authorities, the whole country may be properly organized by next May. The Landowners should be at the head of the movement.

For many centuries the land was chargeable with the defence of the Kingdom, under a triple obligation (called then "trinoda necessitas,") to furnish armed men, and to repair or build castles, bridges, and town walls; first instituted by Anglo-Saxon Kings, this became in later times a condition of feudal tenure.

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In the Anglo-Saxon Era land was given to those who fought in defence of it. One of the Saxon laws says, "if a man hath defended land, with the witness of the shire, *let him take it*, and keep it, and leave it to his children, or whom he likes best." The Landowners are undoubtedly the proper defenders of the soil, assisted by the cultivators of the soil. What can be more natural than self-defence?

Men have their homes and families to protect, and should prepare themselves for that duty by learning the use of the best weapons of the time.

Lord Lieutenants of Counties should have their ancient authority restored, and their old responsibilities re-imposed. The *permanent* measures for defence should be *de-centralized*, and the habitual "*organization*" should be *Local*.

It will be time enough to *centralize* in one command the powers of the country when the invasion happens, and the Sovereign takes the field, and makes *Proclamation*.

For the permanent organization every man should enrol himself in the Parish in which he lives, or has a settlement, as willing to serve in his own person, in case of invasion, either as soldier, or pioneer, (workman), or artificer.

Every parish should send its returns (*nominal* returns) to the Deputy-Lieutenant of the Hundred, by whom a copy of the collected returns would be sent to the Lord-Lieutenant.

Every Hundred should be called upon annually

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to present a proportionate number of men, to be determined by Her Majesty for all England, Scotland, and Wales, and these men should be trained and exercised for eight or nine days as marksmen, receiving pay and rations during that time; and they should not be removed from their "*ward*," or military district (unless to join another ward for exercise for one day), and the ward or military district should be of small extent. The same man should not be compelled to serve two years consecutively in this way, unless he desired to do so, and he should not be *allowed* to serve more than three years, until it came to his turn again. No man would be confined to residence in a particular place, more than at present, except for the *one year* of his nomination for training; and his parish would be held responsible for his being forthcoming, for a twelvemonth after attending exercise.

Arms and accoutrements and a tunic and helmet, canteen and haversack, should be furnished to each of these Local Militiamen, to be returned into store, (with exception of the canteen and haversack), after the period of training, to serve for him again, if called out, or for his successor in the following year. The canteen and haversack should remain in his own possession, as a badge of his military engagement, to show that he is one of the Queen's soldiers for home defence, ready to turn out at a moment's notice, if the country is invaded.

Every ward should have a Warden, appointed like

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other Militia Officers by the Lord-Lieutenant. The Warden would be charged with all details of the Company or Contingent, belonging to his ward.

The Lord-Lieutenant of a maritime county should also be *Lord Warden of the Coast* within his Lieutenancy.*

In every county there should be a Place of Arms, as a Depôt for the "materiel," and to be the Military Station of the District, where all records would be kept having reference to the defence of the Coast and the Country, and the registers of the Local Militiamen, cavalry, infantry, and artillery.

The wards of the Maritime Counties nearest to the shore, would form the outer band for the immediate defence of the coast.

Another band of country, composed of other wards, would form a second region of defence, and of support to the coast; and thus the whole interior of the island would be organized in wards and zones, and Local Militia districts.

Englishmen should always remember that every man has a stake in the country, a freehold inheritance of a *right to sustentation from the soil;* and if infirmity or old age deprive a man of his means of support by his own labour, the country in which he has *a settlement* must take care of him.

That is the obligation of the community towards the individual; and, in consideration of such a

* Except in the Isle of Wight, which has a Governor.

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privilege, the individual is bound to do reasonable service for the State, when the country is in danger.

This is the root of the law, which requires every able man to take arms in case of Foreign Invasion or Internal War, when summoned by the Crown to serve his country.

The Local Forces should be of two classes, rural militia and urban militia. Every town of a certain amount of population, and every town corporate, should form a "*ward.*"

Town wards on the coast should divide their militia into a water guard and land guard.

A Warden should be assisted by Sub-wardens and Serjeants, all to be nominated by the Lord-Lieutenant's recommendation to the Secretary of State for the Home Department; the names of the Wardens to be submitted to Her Majesty for final approval.

Wardens and Sub-wardens to have military rank, with corresponding classes of officers in the army.

Every Ward would constitute a pro-military community, but only for the possible (however improbable) contingency of an invasion.

A Warden, assisted by Sub-Wardens, would organize the inhabitants, appointing the men to be partly armed soldiers, partly pioneers for field works, partly carters, and the old men and boys to be village guards and messengers, and cattle drivers. Bakers and butchers would ply their trades.

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The Warden would take acconnt of live and dead stock, to be so disposed of, that nothing useful should fall into the enemy's hands. All details would be easily regulated by means of a systematic parcelling of the Country into Wards, and making certain functionaries with gradational authority, *all* to be taken from *among the inhabitants*, and to be subordinate to the Lord Lieutenant, chief Magistrate of the County, and the proper *civil-military* commander, according to ancient usage.

In the wars against the Danes in this Kingdom, the forces were called out *by Shires*, each under an Ealdorman.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle of the period abounds in examples of that ordination.

The division of the Kingdom into Counties and Hundreds, was made with a view to Military Organization, and there could be no better. It is just as available for the same purpose now, as it was in the time of Alfred the Great.

The armed men of each Ward would constitute a battalion for actual field service. A Band of Wards, like an Army Division, relieving a similar Division every twelve hours. The Wardsmen who fight on Monday, should rest on Tuesday and Wednesday; but *the enemy* should never be allowed to rest, either by night or day.

Cooks and commissaries should be appointed in every village, to keep the Army well rationed, and hospitals would be prepared for sick and wounded in the larger towns.

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There would be no deficiency of conveyance and transport in the country, from omnibusses and gentlemen's carriages, to waggons and carts.

Forage and stock which could not be removed in time would be burnt or otherwise destroyed.

How to feed regularly the multitudes assembled will be a task for anxious study. There can be no insuperable difficulty about the matter in a country like England, if good arrangements are made in time, on the principle of subdivision of labour, which the distribution by *Wards* will permit and facilitate.

Forethought, one of the great instruments of success in all troublesome undertakings, is required especially in war.

The thinking faculty is the highest attribute of human nature, and to its perpetual exercise the Chiefs of Armies, above all other men, are morally pledged, because they are invested with an office of such eminent responsibility, involving constant solicitude.

There is a fulness of time which brings all things about. Long delayed, long resisted, the organization of Britain for Home Defence is coming to pass at last. That great preparation happily achieved, and the ANNUAL ARRAY of the armed Men of Britain permanently established by law, fatuity alone can threaten us with Invasion.

If a man should thrust his bare hand into a hornet's nest, for the sake of damaging a few of its irritable occupants, what would he be called?

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